



Afternoon Alert - Wednesday, December 21, 2016

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HEADLINES

Noon news

TBS, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi gave top play to follow-up reports on the deadly attack in Berlin. NTV led with a report on an explosion at a fireworks market in Mexico on Tuesday, which killed at least 27 people and injured more than 80. NHK reported that the Norovirus has apparently increased its infectivity due to mutation.

SECURITY

“Class A” mishap involving P8 patrol airplane at Kadena AB

NHK reported at noon that it learned that there was a serious incident involving a P8 surveillance aircraft at Kadena AB on the morning of Dec. 19, saying that the incident was classified by the U.S. military as a "Class A" mishap, which is the most serious incident based on the amount of damage incurred. According to the network, the P8 aircraft, which was being towed for maintenance, collided with a piece of traction equipment. The network said incidents that incur \$2 million in damage or result in death are classified as "Class A" mishaps, adding that the recent Osprey incident was also classified as a "Class A" mishap. Although no injuries were reported, the front wheels and the body of the aircraft were reportedly damaged. Noting that the Osprey incident occurred in Okinawa just this month, the network said the U.S. military's safety management is being questioned.

GOJ to hold its first cabinet meeting on Senkakus

TV Asahi reported at noon that the GOJ will hold its first cabinet meeting on the Senkaku Islands today and announce measures to beef up security around the islands in light of China's increasing maritime activities in the region. The network said the GOJ is planning to increase next year's budget

for the Japan Coast Guard by about 10 billion yen to 210 billion yen mainly to build a large patrol vessel to be deployed around the Senkakus. The GOJ is also planning to increase the number of sailors for patrol boats by more than 100 and deploy a new patrol jet at the Naha base.

Suga says GOJ to push forward Futenma relocation work

NHK reported this afternoon that in response to the Supreme Court's ruling in favor of the central government over the Futenma relocation plan, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga expressed the view this morning that the GOJ will work with the Okinawa government to move forward the relocation work in line with the settlement. He reportedly said at a press conference: "Our nation is a nation governed by law, and the Supreme Court is the final arbiter. Under the ruling, the government and Okinawa will cooperate and respond in a sincere manner in line with the purpose of the settlement, and the government remains committed to promoting the landfill work." He also reportedly said: "I understand that the governor will immediately withdraw his revocation of his predecessor's approval for the landfill work, which was deemed illegal. I would like to carefully watch the moves of the Okinawa government."

Meanwhile, concerning Governor Onaga's plan to skip the planned ceremony for the return of the Northern Training Area in Okinawa, the network said Suga criticized the governor by saying: "The governor himself said he would 'welcome' the return in the past. I heard that he immediately retracted his remarks, but the topic is more serious than that."

Okinawa undeterred despite legal setback on FRF construction

Wednesday's two major Okinawa papers reported heavily on the Supreme Court's verdict yesterday rebuffing an appeal filed by the Okinawa governor that the Fukuoka High Court was wrong in ruling against him over the rescindment of the landfill permit issued by his predecessor. Both papers expressed dismay and rage and took issue with the top court for "disregarding local people's wishes, the rule of law, and the principle of local autonomy." They also echoed local people's criticism that the top bench was "unfair and partial," and urged Governor Onaga to exhaust all possible tools available to block the Henoko transfer plan.

- [**U.S. announces biggest land return on Okinawa to Japan since 1972**](#) (Kyodo News)
- [**Gov't mulls plans to foil Okinawa governor's resistance to Henoko relocation**](#) (Sankei)
- [**Editorial: Supreme Court ruling flies in the face of the will of Okinawans**](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [**Cartoon: Resumption of Osprey flights**](#) (Akahata)
- [**Murakawa appointed as new MSDF chief of staff**](#) (Asahi)

- [Scholars critical of government funding of security technology research](#) (Akahata)

ECONOMY

[GOJ officially decides to decommission Monju reactor](#)

NHK reported this afternoon that the GOJ held a meeting of cabinet ministers, including Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, MEXT Minister Matsuno, and METI Minister Seko, and officially decided to decommission the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture. According to the network, the ministers pointed out that it would take at least eight years of preparation to resume operation of the reactor and it would require more than 540 billion yen to continue its operation after the restart. The ministers decided that due to the increasing financial cost and the amount of time required, operation of the reactor will not be resumed and it will be decommissioned over the course of the next 30 years.

The network said the GOJ will build a new framework in which the Japan Atomic Energy Agency can move forward the decommissioning process while ensuring safety under the guidance and supervision of the government. The network said the GOJ is planning to build an alternative fast-breeder reactor at the site of Monju and designate the region as one of the main R&D centers for fast-breeder reactors in the future. The network said the ministers also confirmed promoting research and development of fast-breeder reactors through facilities at home and abroad, such as a demonstration reactor being jointly designed by Japan and France and the experimental *fast reactor Joyo in Ibaraki*.

- [Japan drafts equal-pay guidelines](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [FY17 Fiscal Investment and Loan Program to total 15.1 trillion yen](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Gov't decides on basic policy on drug pricing system reforms](#) (Nikkei)
- [Difference remains over fast reactor project between gov't, private sector](#) (Mainichi)

OPINION POLLS

- [40% of both Japanese and Americans say Japan-U.S. ties "will worsen in future," Yomiuri-Gallup poll](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Infographic: Trust between Japan and the U.S., Yomiuri-Gallup poll](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Infographic: Appraisal of Japan-U.S. relations, Yomiuri-Gallup poll](#) (Yomiuri)

- [Yomiuri-Gallup opinion poll & results from Yomiuri Shimbun](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Opinion poll & results from Asahi Shimbun](#) (Asahi)
- [Opinion poll & results from Sankei Shimbun](#) (Sankei)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 20](#) (Nikkei)
- [Abe meeting with labor group chief to drive wedge into relationship with DP](#) (Nikkei)

INTERNATIONAL

- [Japan plans to oppose South Sudan arms embargo resolution: sources](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Kishida says Japan, EU to aim for agreement on free trade pact in 2017](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Abe offers condolences to Merkel](#) (Nikkei)
- [Abe offers condolences to Putin](#) (Nikkei)
- [Japan to open three new diplomatic missions to compete with China](#) (Mainichi)
- [Uncompromising Abe barely reached agreement with Putin](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Abe keen on Japan's UNSC permanent membership](#) (Mainichi)
- [Editorial: China's seizure of undersea drone seen as use of force against U.S.](#) (The Japan News)

SCIENCE

- [2nd launch of new solid fuel rocket puts satellite into orbit](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)

TV PROGRAMS

Repercussions of Osprey incident

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" reported on the Osprey landing in waters off Nago, Okinawa, saying that flight operations of the Osprey resumed as soon as a week after the incident. The program said

the U.S. military's severe training is behind the incident, adding that an expert points out that the number of rigorous exercises involving the aircraft is increasing as the U.S. military's operations are becoming diverse, quoting a former ASDF officer as saying: "Lately it has become standard practice to carry out military operations under extremely severe conditions. Unless they repeat exercises at night and during inclement weather, they will not be able to achieve a level of readiness to be able to carry out such operations. We must understand there is fundamentally no guarantee there will absolutely be no accidents." The program also said it found that the U.S. military also conducts Osprey "touch-and-go" exercises at night during the 8:30 to 10:30 p.m time frame. The program said that according to Ginowan City, the U.S. military conducted flight operations of Ospreys and other aircraft after 10 p.m. 211 times from April to November this year, adding that many local residents are filing complaints with the city. The program also noted that Osprey flight training is expected to be held across the nation and that a total of ten Ospreys are expected to be deployed at Yokota AB in Tokyo starting next year.

Former defense minister Morimoto appeared live on the show and said that although the incident is regrettable, the pilot made the appropriate decision. He added, however, that the U.S. military needs to validate a safer way to conduct refueling exercises and notify the GOJ. The program also reported that the incident especially shocked the people in the Takae district in Okinawa, where six new helipads were being constructed in return for the reversion of 50% of the Northern Training Area. The program said the U.S. military is planning to conduct 2,500 training exercises involving the Osprey there annually, adding that local residents are increasingly concerned about noise and safety issues. Morimoto concluded by saying that the time has come for the people of Japan to seriously think about how to resolve the base issue in order to maintain the USFJ in a stable manner.

[Note: The program will not air during the holiday season from Dec. 21 and will resume on Jan. 4.]

